

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A flotation device for maintaining an aircraft in a floating and stable condition, the flotation device comprising:
 - at least one flotation bladder mounted to the aircraft; and
 - inflation means for inflating the flotation bladder.
2. The flotation device of claim 1 wherein the inflation of the flotation bladder is selected from the group consisting of automatic and manual.
3. The flotation device of claim 1 wherein the inflation of the flotation bladder occurs upon a predetermined event.
4. The flotation device of claim 3 and further comprising:
monitoring means for determining the occurrence of the predetermined event.
5. The flotation device of claim 3 wherein the predetermined event is a predetermined amount of water entering the aircraft.
6. The flotation device of claim 1, and further comprising:
a float switch activating a valve upon a predetermined amount of water entering the aircraft, the valve connected to the inflation means for activating the inflation means.
7. The flotation device of claim 1 wherein the flotation bladder is in a substantially flattened spiral configuration prior to inflation.

8. The flotation device of claim 1 wherein the flotation bladder comprises a plurality of flotation bladders, each flotation bladder being independently inflatable
9. The flotation device of claim 1 wherein the flotation bladder have coloring and markings.
10. The flotation device of claim 1 wherein the activation of the flotation bladder triggers an emergency beacon.
11. The flotation device of claim 1 wherein the flotation bladders can be used during emergency landings on land or water.
12. An emergency buoyant support for an aircraft in the water, the emergency buoyant support comprising:
 - a cover releasably secured to the aircraft;
 - at least one inflatable flotation bladder positioned between the cover and the aircraft;
 - wherein upon inflation of the flotation bladder, the flotation bladder moves the cover in a general direction away from the aircraft.
13. The emergency buoyant support of claim 12, and further comprising:
 - a carrier mounted to the aircraft.
14. The emergency buoyant support of claim 12, and further comprising:
 - inflation means for inflating the flotation bladder; and
 - a gas supply tubing connected to the inflation means, the flotation bladder being secured to the gas supply tubing such that gas flowing through the gas supply tubing inflates the flotation bladder.

15. The emergency buoyant support of claim 14, and further comprising:
 - a float switch activating a valve upon a predetermined amount of water entering the aircraft, the valve connected to the inflation means for activating the inflation means; and
 - a gas supply connected to the gas supply tubing and the float switch.
16. A method for maintaining an aircraft in the water in a stable floating condition, the method comprising:
 - mounting at least one flotation bladder to the aircraft; and
 - inflating the flotation bladder upon occurrence of a predetermined event.
17. The method of claim 16 and further comprising:
 - inflating the flotation bladder automatically or manually.
18. The method of claim 16 and further comprising:
 - monitoring the occurrence of the predetermined event.
19. The method of claim 16 and further comprising:
 - activating a valve upon a predetermined amount of water entering the aircraft, the valve connected to the inflation means for activating the inflation means.
20. The method of claim 16 and further comprising:
 - folding the flotation bladder is in a substantially flattened spiral configuration prior to inflation.
21. The method of claim 16 and further comprising:
 - providing a plurality of flotation bladders, each flotation bladder being independently inflatable.

22. The method of claim 16 and further comprising:
coloring and marking the flotation bladder.
23. The method of claim 16 and further comprising:
activation an emergency beacon upon inflation of the flotation bladder.
24. The method of claim 16 and further comprising:
using the flotation bladders during emergency landings on land or water.